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FORBIDDEN TALES OF DARK MANSION

NO. 7

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FORBIDDEN TALES OF DARK MANSION

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

MW KALUTA

WELCOME--

TO THE WORLD OF *DARK MANSIONS*--
A WORLD WHERE STRANGE, UNHOLY THINGS PROWL THE LAND BY NIGHT AND LURK IN THE SHADOWS BY DAY...

...A WORLD WHERE THE DEAD CAN KNOW NO REST--WHERE EVERY GRIM NIGHTMARE YOU'VE EVER DREAMT IS A HORRIBLE REALITY!

...A TOAST, THEN... HERE'S TO ***DARK MANSIONS!*** YOU ARE WELCOME TO ***STAY***--BUT YOU MAY NOT LEAVE HERE--***ALIVE!***

HARRIER KALUTA

J-1675

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IN VAIN, RON EVANS STRUGGLES TO ESCAPE FROM THE GLOOMY RECESSES OF THE SIERRA MADRE MTS., LOST WHILE HUNTING ALONE! A TRAIL BACK TO CIVILIZATION ELUDES HIS FRANTIC EYES.

FOR THREE DAYS HE HAS BEEN ON A TREADMILL OF TORMENT. LASHED BY GNAWING HUNGER AND BURNING THIRST.

ALMOST CRAZED BY LACK OF SLEEP, GIBBERING AT PHANTOMS BECKONING HIM TOWARDS A NAMELESS HELL...

SUDDENLY PRIMITIVE HORROR BULGES FROM EVANS' EYES. HE FINDS HIMSELF EMBRACED IN A SICKENING OBSCENITY. HIS THROAT CONVULSES. A HOARSE OUTCRY GURGLES FROM HIM AS IF FROM DEEP INSIDE A STEAMING PIT. HIS VERY SOUL MOANS FOR ESCAPE FROM THE BEADY-EYED DREAD HUNGRILY REACHING FOR HIM...

I-I MUST BE HAVING A NIGHTMARE W-WITH MY EYES WIDE OPEN... I'M TRAPPED BY A GIANT SPIDER--!

RON EVANS IS A HUNTER. NOW HE FINDS HIMSELF THE HUNTED. HIS DARKEST DREAMS BECOME RENDING REALITY. THERE IS NO ESCAPE. NO HUMAN TO HEAR HIS OUTCRIES. HE IS THE WRITHING VICTIM OF A CREATURE SHUNNED BY MAN AND BEAST...

SCRIPT: ROBERT KANIGHER

ART: HOWARD CHAYKIN + DE ZUÑIGA

"EYE OF THE BEHOLDER!"

J1602

OVERWHELMING NAUSEA WELLS UP WITHIN RON EVANS. HIS FLESH CRAWLS AT THE NEARNESS OF THE UNBLINKING, BEADY EYES FIXED ON HIM WITH A GHOULISH HUNGER...

THE SPIDER-- IT'S DRAWING ME TOWARDS HER JAWS!

MADNESS BLAZES IN HIS FEVERED BRAIN. HE SLASHES WITH INSANE REVULSION AT THE STICKY SKEINS IMPRISONING HIM...

AAAGGHHNNNN-- I'VE GOT TO STOP IT!

RIIIP...

THROUGH A LOATHSOME ETERNITY EVANS HYSTERICALLY LASHES OUT-- STABBING-- CUTTING-- SLASHES... SCREAMING AGAINST THE PRIMEVAL HORROR PATIENTLY WAITING TO ENGULF HIM IN ITS MAW... UNTIL...

HELP!--HELP! AAAAHHHH!

HE FALLS TO THE DARK GROUND, CRUMPLING LIKE A RAGGED SCARE-CROW... INTO THE BLESSED OBLIVION OF UNCONSCIOUSNESS...

OHHHHHH...

YOU'RE ALL RIGHT NOW.

WH-WHO ARE YOU?

I AM ELANA. I FOUND YOU LYING HERE. I'LL TAKE YOU TO MY FATHER'S HOUSE-- NOT FAR FROM HERE. YOU'LL BE SAFE.

YES... SAFE... SAFE... THANK GOD!

THROUGH THE OMINOUS WOODS, THE LOVELY YOUNG GIRL LEADS THE HARASSED HUNTER... SOOTHING HIS NIGHTMARISH BABBLING... TOWARDS THE MONOLITHIC MASS OF SPIRES AND TURRETS AND STAINED GLASS WINDOWS...

FATHER! FATHER, I'M HOME! MY FATHER IS A HEALER. HE WILL MAKE YOU WELL.

FATHER--THIS IS RON EVANS. I FOUND HIM IN THE FOREST. HE IS ILL.

IT WAS REAL... I TELL YOU! I DIDN'T IMAGINE IT. A GIANT SPIDER. TRAPPING ME.

I KNOW, MY SON. I, TOO, HAVE SEEN THE FACE OF FEAR, BUT I WILL HELP YOU. COME IN, YOU'RE EXHAUSTED.

ELANA SOOTHES THE FRANTIC EVANS WITH HER SOFT VOICE AND CARESSING EYES AS HER FATHER USHERS THEM TO A DISPLAY OF SLEEPING EVIL...

I SPECIALIZE IN THE STUDY OF SPIDERS. I HAVE ONE OF THE MOST EXTENSIVE ARRAY OF SPECIMENS IN THE WORLD, FROM THE TWO SUPERFAMILIES --AVICULARIIDAE AND ARGIOPIDAE.

DO YOU SEE YOUR GIANT SPIDER HERE?

N-NO...

RELIEF FLOODS EVANS' DRIVEN HEART...

OF COURSE THERE'S NO SUCH GIANT SPIDER. YOU WERE HALLUCINATING FROM YOUR ORDEAL. BUT REST HERE, WE WILL CURE YOU.

THANK YOU, KIND SIR. AND WITH A NURSE AS BEAUTIFUL AS YOUR DAUGHTER, I'D STAY FOREVER.

WHEN YOU SEE ELANA'S TWIN SISTER, ORA, YOU WILL STAY FOREVER.

SHE'S VISITING FRIENDS. WE EXPECT HER ANY TIME NOW.

TAKE CARE OF YOUR GUEST, ELANA. FEED HIM. THEN, TAKE HIM TO THE EAST ROOM.

CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING.

DURING THE NIGHT, EVANS WRITHES IN THE THROES OF THE NIGHTMARISH BEING INTO WHOSE GAPING MAW HE WAS HELPLESSLY DRAWN. HIS STRUGGLE TO ESCAPE THE BEADY, UNBLINKING EYES-- THE HUNGRY JAWS-- BLANKETS HIM WITH ICY SWEAT...

NO--NO! OHH, GOD-- NO! YAAAAAAH!

THE COMING OF DAWN DRIVES HIS UNHOLY FANCIES AWAY.

ELANA-- ARE YOU REAL? OR A BEAUTIFUL DREAM THAT WILL VANISH?

I'M NOT A DREAM, RON.

EVANS' HEART POUNDS AGAINST ELANA'S... HIS ARMS TREMBLE ABOUT HER... HIS LIPS TOUCH HERS... GENTLY.

SUDDENLY, THE DANK SCENT OF EVIL SHATTERS HIS SHELL OF BLISS. HE STARES IN HORROR AT THE WATCHFUL FOREST FILLED WITH A THOUSAND EYES...

RON-- WHAT IS IT?

THE-- THE GIANT SPIDER! I SAW IT! WATCHING! WAITING!

LIGHTLY AS A BUTTERFLY'S WINGS, ELANA'S LIPS BRUSH EVANS' FEARFUL IMAGININGS AWAY...

THERE'S NO ONE HERE BUT-- YOU AND I! BELIEVE ME-- BELIEVE ME!

YES-- YES, ELANA-- I DO...

THAT NIGHT, REMEMBERING THE SWEET KISSES OF THE DAY, EVANS WALKS OUT ON THE BALCONY OUTSIDE HIS BED CHAMBER...

ELANA-- ELANA-- I LOVE YOU...

HE IS ANSWERED BY THE LOATHSOME BONDS OF WEBBY SKEINS...

NO-- NO! IT'S NOT HAPPENING AGAIN! I MUST BE DREAMING!

BUT THIS IS THE STUFF MADNESS IS BORN OUT OF... EVANS STRUGGLES FRANTICALLY AGAINST THE GHOULISH EMBRACE TOWARDS WHICH HE IS INEXORABLY DRAWN... AND THE CAVERNOUS MAW SILENTLY AWAITING HIM...

I'M NOT HAVING A NIGHTMARE! THIS IS REAL! REAL! REAL! A HELL ON EARTH! IT'S WAITING FOR ME!

WITH STRENGTH BORN OUT OF TERRIFIED DESPAIR, EVANS FRANTICALLY WRENCHES HIMSELF LOOSE...

HIS SENSES SHOCKED, EVANS THRASHED THROUGH THE DARK WATERS, UNTIL...

WE HEARD THE COMMOTION... WHAT HAPPENED, MY BOY?

THE GIANT SPIDER! SHE'S ON THE WALL ABOVE MY BALCONY! SHE ALMOST TRAPPED ME! LOOK!

THERE'S NOTHING THERE, OF COURSE. SEEING MY COLLECTION OF SPIDERS MUST HAVE TRIGGERED A NIGHTMARE. YOU WALKED IN YOUR SLEEP. FELL OFF THE BALCONY. I'LL GIVE YOU A POTION TO SETTLE YOU.

I'LL STAY AT YOUR SIDE UNTIL YOU SLEEP.

SLEEP... MY LOVE, SLEEP...

SUDDENLY RISING AS IF REFRESHED, CLEANSED OF THE DEMONIC OBSESSION...

I LOVE YOU, ELANA. I WISH TO MARRY YOU.

I LOVE YOU, TOO, RON, BUT I CANNOT MARRY YOU. YOU SEE, MY SISTER LOVES YOU, TOO.

SMILING SECRETLY, HE LEADS THE STUNNED EVANS DOWN SUBTERRANEAN STAIRS...

IMPOSSIBLE!-- I NEVER MET HER!

BUT YOU DID, MY BOY, YOU DID! AND YOUR SALVATION... OR DAMNATION... LIES IN YOUR CHOICE.

EVANS' SENSES REEL IN HALLUCINATORY HORROR. FACING HIM IN FRONT OF THE MASSIVE DOORS OF A LABYRINTH ARE A MAID AND A MONSTER. BELOVED AND BEAST. THE COMELY AND THE CARICATURE. BOTH WELCOMING HIM...

ELANA... AND THE SPIDER... S-SISTERS-- (CHOKE) THIS IS MADNESS.

THERE THEY ARE, ELANA AND ORA. EACH WANTS YOU. LIFE IS MADNESS. WHAT WILL YOU RISK FOR THE ONE YOU LOVE? YOUR SANITY?

HIS BLOOD ROARING IN HIS BRAIN, THE FEVERISH EVANS ALLOWS HIMSELF TO BE BLINDFOLDED...

EVANS' SHAKING HAND TREMBLES FIRST TOWARDS ONE OMINOUS CLOSED DOOR... THEN ANOTHER-- WHILE BEHIND HIM HE IS CAJOLED BY A SATANIC VOICE...

IN THE DARKNESS OF THE LABYRINTH, EVANS' AGONIZED HEART ALMOST BURSTS AS HE STUMBLES INTO A SOFT EMBRACE...

WRENCHING OFF HIS BLINDFOLD, EVANS FEELS THE WAVE OF HORROR RECEDE FROM HIS TORTURED MIND, AS HIS FEVERISH LIPS ARE SOOTHED BY A COOLING MOUTH...

SEE? I KNEW MY HEART WOULD MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICE! LEAD ME TO THE ONE I LOVE! NOTHING CAN EVER SEPARATE US FROM NOW ON! MY NIGHTMARE IS OVER!

DAYDREAM OR NIGHTMARE. HEAVEN OR HELL. REALITY OR FANTASY. WHO CAN TELL WHERE ONE ENDS AND THE OTHER BEGINS? ESPECIALLY WHEN-- BEAUTY IS IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER!

THE END

Good evening, horror fans—welcome to . . . THE DARK MANSION. It's good to have you all here . . . safe . . . secure . . . within the ancient timbers. How was your trip? Safe, I hope? Did you mind the fowl stench of the fetid swamplands that encircle the Mansion? And the howling . . . did that upset you? I hope not . . . hee hee hee. I wouldn't want anything to happen to you . . . not this night. I've plans for you tomorrow.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. Relax . . . pull up a chair . . . sit back . . . and enjoy these letters. It may be the last pleasurable moments you'll ever know . . . HA! HA! HA!

*****

Dear Editor:

I have read almost all the previous issues of Dark Mansion and found them all interesting and well done. Now, tonight, I read issue 5, and here are my reactions:

First, the cover . . . previous covers were better than this one. There was just something lacking this time around. The scene was exciting and intriguing, but the art itself just wasn't up to par. I guess I've been spoiled by the really great covers on some of the others.

But now the story itself . . . first, let me say I enjoy long lead stories in comics because it permits greater involvement on the part of the reader. So, needless to say, your 36-pagers are my favorites. Apart from their length, the tales of terror have excellent quality plots and art. I am glad to see the title changed with #5, since the book can now concentrate more on horror stories, and not necessarily on love stories, which was starting to get dull for the male readers.

THEY ALL CAME TO DIE by Jack Oleck was not at all original. But it was well-handled nevertheless. It was easy to see the plot was taken from the story TEN LITTLE INDIANS, and not much of it was altered except for the number of people on the island, and their names. The killer even turned out to be a judge, as in the movie, and the ending with the hangman's noose left for the girl was identical. I don't know how Mr. Oleck got away with copying this famous movie without listing any credits or permission, but I'm glad he did it.

The story was still interesting and had something the movie did not . . . the artwork of Don Heck. These factors gave me a favorable impression of the story, plus, again, the fact that it was 36 pages in length. I also liked the idea of dividing the stories into chapters, since it both adds suspense, and lends to the comic appearance of a novel.

I think the love theme was a little overdone in the story, and it got absurd after awhile. Love is a factor in horror stories, but it should not dominate the story. Judith Fremont was made to look ridiculous . . . the way she kept changing her mind every two seconds about which of the men she should love. I think you should tone down the love, and add more horror.

Frank Verzyl
Lindenhurst, N.Y.

Dear Frank:

Part of Judith's problem was in her mind . . . which man was faithful to her . . . which was not. This was one of the elements that made this story different from TEN LITTLE INDIANS (a movie based on Agatha Christie's "And Then There Were None.") Granted there were similarities, but the motivation of the story was different.

*****

Dear Editor:

I think your magazine is just fantastic. I especially loved the story in issue # 5, THEY ALL CAME TO DIE. The characterizations of Judith and Miles were excellent, and though I sort of guessed who the killer was, the ending still came as a surprise to me.

My only complaint with this issue was with the art. Now, I like Don's stuff—I always have, even when he worked for your competitors, but I think he rushed this story out a bit too quickly. But, with Don, even a rush job is of top quality. His work reminds me a bit of Alex Toth's art.

One of the main reasons I'm writing is to recount a true tale of ESP with you.

I have a little cousin, a girl, and she always likes to play outside in the lot behind our house. Anyway, one day I sort of heard her screaming . . . she wasn't really screaming, but I heard it in my head. I rushed outside and ran to the lot where I saw a dog running after her. I chased the dog away and my cousin was fine, but I keep thinking that I must have had a case of ESP.

Art Stampler
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Dear Art:

Your story is similar to many others we have heard. ESP does exist . . . too many people have sent us stories for us not to believe in it.

*****

Hee Hee Hee . . . did you enjoy those letters, my friends? You did? Very good . . . very good. Now then, are you rested? Calm? Ah . . . good . . . good. Then come with me . . . downstairs. No . . . don't struggle . . . it's not going to hurt much . . . you'll hardly feel the pain. Come now . . . be brave. You've sat through my latest collection of horror stories . . . you've been sufficiently frightened out of your skulls . . . what could be worse?

There . . . before you . . . the door. Enter it. ENTER. DON'T TURN BACK . . . BLAST YOU. GO THROUGH THAT DOOR . . . NOW!!!

Ah, he's left at last. I could understand his hesitation . . . how he'd rather stay here with me, deep within the winding catacombs of the Dark Mansion, but he just couldn't . . . after all, he was just a visitor here . . . he just had to go back out there . . . back to that horrible world of terror and fright known as . . . civilization.

REALM OF THE MYSTIC

AMONG THOSE MYSTIC BEINGS CALLED ANGELS WHO ONCE REVOLTED AGAINST THE GOOD AND WERE DEFEATED--ONE OF THE MOST DREADED IS BALAN THE TERRIBLE!
A MASTER OF DECEIT, BALAN HAS OUTWITTED AND ENSNARED MANY A STUDENT OF THE MYSTIC ARTS WHO SOUGHT TO CONTROL HIM...
6-65

COMMANDING FORTY LEGIONS OF FROTHING DEMONS, BALAN LIVES YET AND STRUGGLES ON AGAINST THE OCCULT FORCES OF GOODNESS--SEEKING ALWAYS TO OVERWHELM HEAVEN AND EARTH IN A TIDE OF HORROR AND UNABATING CRUELTY.

YOUR BROTHER MUST REALLY BE *DYING* TO HAVE *BURIED* HIMSELF IN THIS *MAUSOLEUM!*

LET'S GET THIS OVER WITH!

HEY, YOU-- WHERE'S DR. JACKSON ADAMS!

J-1519

FEEL THE CHILL, FRIENDS? THAT HARSH, BITTER BREATH OF HATRED? JACK *APPEARS* TO WELCOME THE BROTHER WHO PIRATED HIS DISCOVERIES; THE FIANCEE WHO BE-TRAYED HIM! YET APPEARANCES ARE DECEIVING WHEN ONE FACES...

WHAT'S THE MATTER, EDWARD? DON'T YOU RECOGNIZE YOUR *OLDER* BROTHER?

JACK?

THE IMMORTALITY THIEVES!

THAT STUNNED RECOGNITION AS THEY FOLLOWED ME--THE NAKED ENVY IN EDWARD'S EYES--YES, I ENJOYED IT!

THE YEARS HAVE *FATTENED* YOUR JOWLS, EDWARD--BUT LAURA RETAINS THE *REMNANTS* OF HER BEAUTY!

BUT YOU HAVEN'T *CHANGED!*

UNCHANGED? WITHIN THE ACID-STAINED CONFINES OF MY LABORATORY, I COULD *ALMOST* BELIEVE THAT!

THAT POOR DOG--HE'S CRIPPLED!

OLD DUKE? YOU SHOULD HAVE...

PUT HIM OUT OF HIS MISERY?

SURPRISING HOW CREATURES *CLING* TO LIFE... A YEAR AGO, DOCTORS GAVE ME ONLY MONTHS TO LIVE!

WILL THAT INJECTION HELP HIM?

WHAT?

H-HE'S *COMPLETELY* REJUVENATED!

A *YOUTH* SERUM! JACK, MY COMPANY WILL PAY YOU *THOUSANDS!*

NO! MY SERUM'S NOT FOR SALE!

I'VE DESTROYED THE FORMULA-- ONLY THOSE TWO SAMPLES IN THE SAFE REMAIN!

SO *YOU* CAN MAKE MILLIONS?

BUT YOU CAME FOR A *FRIENDLY* VISIT, NOT TO TALK BUSI-NESS!

JACK STILL *HATES* MY GUTS!

CONTINUED ON 35¢ PAGE FOLLOWING.

WE HAD DINNER, THEN ENTERTAINMENT AS LAURA RECALLED OUR HAPPIER DAYS. ONLY EDWARD FOUND HER TACTICS UNAMUSING...

RETIRING EARLY, *BABY* BROTHER?

THE WAY YOU TWO *NEEDLE* EACH OTHER...

I'LL MAKE THE CALL BEFORE LAURA COMES UPSTAIRS!

BUT I KNOW YOU DON'T MEAN ANYTHING BY IT! SWEET DREAMS, BROTHER JACK!

LAURA CAN PLAY IT CUTE, BUT I'M THE ONE WHOSE GONNA GET THAT *SERUM!*

JACK'S A FOOL TO THINK THAT SAFE OF HIS CAN STOP ME!

A BABY COULD'VE CRACKED THIS BOX, ADAMS! WHAT YA AFTER THIS TIME?

SHUT UP-- YOU'RE MAKING ENOUGH NOISE TO WAKE THE *DEAD!*

HAND DELIVER THOSE VIALS *UNDERSTAND!*

WELL, BROTHER EDWARD'S BEEN BUSY! IT WON'T BE LONG NOW!

IN THE MORNING, EVEN BLACK COFFEE FAILED AS AN ANTI-DOTE FOR LAURA'S SACCHARINE SWEETNESS...

DEAREST, OF COURSE I LOVED YOU...

BUT EDWARD *NEEDED* ME!

TO SPEND HIS MONEY?

YOU TWO START EARLY!

DON'T MIND EDWARD! HE'S AN ABSOLUTE *BEAR* BEFORE BREAKFAST! AFTER WE'RE HERE A FEW DAYS...

WE'RE LEAVING *NOW*, LAURA!

NO! NOT WITHOUT THE SERUM! JACK, STOP THIS RIDICULOUS GAME-- YOU CAN'T JUST LEAVE US *THIS* WAY!

OH, CAN'T I? YOU NEVER DID UNDERSTAND ME!

DO COME AGAIN, *BOTH* OF YOU!

TAKING, NOT *BEGGING*, IS THE SECRET OF SUCCESS, MY DEAR!

AS THEY LEFT I COULD *ALMOST* FEEL SORRY FOR LAURA...

IT'S *ALWAYS* BEEN JACK THAT I LOVED!

HIS LOVING BROTHER HASTILY RETURNED TO HIS PENTHOUSE--EAGER TO PROVE WHO WAS MASTER!

GET UP, LAURA!

THAT SURPRISE I MENTIONED--WE HAVE A VISITOR!

YOUR DOCTOR?!

EDWARD, YOU'VE GOT THE SERUM!

ISN'T IT DANGEROUS?

NEVER ONE TO WORRY *BEFORE* HE LEAPED, EDWARD TOOK THE INJECTION; THEN FEARED DEATH AS THE SLOW SECONDS PASSED...

BECOMING MINUTES MEASURED BY MELTING INCHES...

MY STOMACH'S LIKE A ROCK!

BLOOD PRESSURE-- LUNGS-- *GREAT!*

IT'S WORKING! GIVE *ME* THE INJECTION!

SO, SWEETHEART, THE *OLD MAN* LOOKS GOOD? YOU WERE *TOO* QUICK *DUMPING* ME FOR JACK!

YOU KNOW I WAS ONLY TRYING TO GET THIS SERUM FOR THE *BOTH* OF US!

FORGET IT, BABY!

I'VE HAD IT WITH YOUR TRICKS! YOU TRIED TO CUDDLE UP TO JACK AND *LOST!*

NOW SEE WHO WANTS AN *OLD HAG!*

CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING.

EDWARD WOULD ENJOY LAURA'S DESPERATE PLEAS... HER TEARFUL ASSURANCES OF UNDYING LOVE... BRINGING HIS WIFE FIRMLY TO HEEL BEFORE REWARDING HER WITH THE SERUM... AND YOUTH!

UNCHANGED, YET REBORN, THEY JETTED TO ITALY... WHERE EDWARD FLAUNTED HIS POWERFUL MUSCLES... WHILE LAURA AGAIN ANGLED FOR THE ADMIRATION IN ALL MEN'S EYES...

LIKE CHILDREN, THEY PLAYED ON...

...NEVER DREAMING THAT THIS WAS THE BEGINNING OF THE NIGHTMARE!

MY ACHING BACK!

THE LINES ARE BACK! WHAT'S HAPPENING?

START PACKING! JACK'S GONNA TELL US!

THEY RACED BACK TO BROTHER JACK... LAURA'S TEARS ROLLING DOWN HER COARSENING CHEEKS...

COULD HE HAVE SWITCHED THE SERUM?

NO!

YOU MUST MAKE HIM GIVE US THE RIGHT FORMULA! OFFER HIM *ANYTHING* WE HAVE!

I'LL BREAK HIS BACK FIRST!

JACK, *PLEASE* HELP US! YOUR SERUM'S *FAILED!*

YOU TRICKED ME!

AH, MY *LOVING* FAMILY RETURNS! *COME CLOSER!*

WHAT--WHO ARE YOU?

YOUR BROTHER JACK! YOU SEE, MY SERUM'S ABILITY TO REJUVENATE IS ONLY TEMPORARY...

THEN THE PROCESS REVERSES RAPIDLY...

HEE HEE! I WAS *ALREADY* DYING...

BUT NOW *YOU* WILL BE JOINING ME IN DEATH WITHIN A FEW SHORT DAYS! *HA, HA, HA!*

AH, THE SWEET SOUND OF SQUABBLING SIBLINGS! IT TAKES ME BACK TO MY OWN DELIGHTFULLY DEVILISH CHILD-HOOD!

THE END.

SKYSCRAPERS REAR THEIR GLEAMING CHROMIUM TOWERS TOWARD JETS PASSING IN THE SKIES OVER THE MODERN METROPOLIS...

BUT, IN ONE TINY SECTION BELOW, A DUCAL DOMAIN OF TRANSPLANTED TRANSYLVANIA STILL EXISTS...

J-1266

TAILOR

TOBACCO

FLORIST

...WITH THE DUKE ARROGANTLY CLAIMING HIS FEUDAL RIGHTS FROM HIS FORMER SUBJECTS, AS IF HE WERE STILL IN THE OLD COUNTRY, STRIDING THROUGH HIS VAST ESTATE...AS IF TIME HAD STOOD STILL...

I TRUST THE DUKE WILL BE PLEASED AT MY HUMBLE OFFERING?

I HAD BETTER BE, IVANOV. IT IS ***MY*** REGAL RIGHT TO CLAIM WHATEVER I FANCY, AND ***YOURS*** TO GIVE WITHOUT QUESTION. IT ***WAS*** ALWAYS SO-- AND IT ***WILL*** ALWAYS ***BE*** SO!

"The Royal RIGHT"

PLOT: JOE ORLANDO — SCRIPT: BOB KANIGHER — ART: BILL DRAUT

YOU ARE A PRETTY WENCH. WHAT IS YOUR NAME?

ILLYA, YOUR HIGHNESS... THANK YOU...

PERHAPS, SOMEDAY, I WILL GIVE YOU THE HONOR OF PLEASING ME, ILLYA.

I AM YOUR LOYAL SUBJECT, DUKE. AS ARE WE ALL. YOUR PLEASURE IS OUR COMMAND. AT ANY TIME... ANY PLACE.

ONE EVENING-- AT THE HOME OF PETROV, THE BUTCHER...

EAT, DRINK, AND BE MERRY, MY FRIENDS. THIS IS A NEW COUNTRY WHERE EVERY MAN IS EQUAL-- AND IF YOU WORK HARD AND SAVE-- YOU CAN RISE TO BECOME ***ANYTHING YOU WISH!***

YOUR HIGHNESS? I DID NOT EXPECT YOU TO COME TO MY HUMBLE HOUSE! WHAT BRINGS YOU ***HERE?***

THE FOOD-- I HEAR IT IS GOOD!

THE DUKE HONORS US, WIFE-- SET AN ***EXTRA*** CHAIR FOR HIS HIGHNESS.

NOT AN ***EXTRA*** CHAIR, PETROV. I WANT ***YOUR*** CHAIR AT THE ***HEAD*** OF THE TABLE. IT IS MY DUCAL RIGHT-- MY ROYAL CLAIM TO BE ***FIRST!***

CONDITIONED BY CENTURIES OF SUBSERVIENCE, THE BUTCHER ABRUPTLY OBEYS THE DEMAND OF THE IMPERIOUS INTRUDER...

TAKE M-MY CHAIR--AT THE-- THE HEAD OF THE TABLE, DUKE!

YOUR PLACE IS TO REMEMBER THAT YOU ARE STILL MY VASSAL, PETROV... NO MATTER WHERE WE ARE.

YOUR PLEASURE-- IS MY COMMAND, DUKE--

GOOD-- YOU WILL SEE ME OFTEN!

A FEW DAYS LATER--AT THE SHOP OF PUSHKIN, THE TAILOR...

ALL MY LIFE--IN THE OLD COUNTRY--I'VE SEWN MY FINGERS TO THE BONE MAKING FINE CLOTHES FOR OTHERS. VAINLY, I'VE DREAMED OF SUCH A SUIT FOR MYSELF. BUT THIS COUNTRY IS DIFFERENT.

I'VE SAVED EVERY PENNY. NOW, FINALLY, MY DREAM HAS COME TRUE. WHEN I PUT THIS SPOTLESS GARMENT ON FOR THE FESTIVAL TONIGHT--I WILL FEEL LIKE A PRINCE-- NOT A TAILOR.

ЯОЛІАТ

THIS SUIT LOOKS AS IF IT WERE MADE *JUST* FOR *ME*. I WILL WEAR IT NOW, PUSHKIN.

BUT... YOUR HIGHNESS-- THIS SUIT IS MINE, I'VE NEVER WORN IT. I-I WAS SAVING IT FOR THE FESTIVAL--

DO YOU DARE TO DEFY MY DUCAL RIGHT OF TAKING WHATEVER I WISH--*BEFORE* MY SUBJECTS? TO ALWAYS BE *FIRST*?

NO... YOUR HIGHNESS. TAKE IT... IT IS YOURS--

SHORTLY...

WE ARE ALIKE *ONLY* IN SIZE, PUSHKIN. BUT NEVER FORGET THAT BIRTH MADE *ME* A *DUKE*--AND *YOU* A MERE *TAILOR*--

I WILL NOT FORGET-- YOUR HIGHNESS--

THAT EVENING, AT THE FESTIVAL, THE IMPERIOUS DUKE MAKES HIS USUAL DEMANDS...

OUT OF THE WAY, CLODS. I AM THIRSTY, LENKI.

BUT--YOUR HIGHNESS-- MY CUSTOMERS--?

THEY CAN WAIT, WINESELLER! I COME FIRST.

DUKE--YOU SPILLED WINE ON YOUR BEAUTIFUL SUIT--LET ME DRY IT FOR YOU?

WHAT IS THAT TO ME, LENKI? TEND TO YOUR STALL. GOOD EVENING, ILLYA. REMEMBER MY PROMISE.

I WILL REMEMBER, YOUR HIGHNESS!

THE NEXT MORNING...

I AM THROUGH WITH THIS SUIT, PUSHKIN. YOU MAY WEAR IT NOW. ARE MY CLOTHES CLEANED AND PRESSED?

Y-YES... DUKE--

MY DREAM IS SOILED-- FOREVER--

CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING.

A FEW DAYS LATER...

I COULD NEVER OWN SUCH A BEAUTIFUL CAR IN THE OLD COUNTRY, BUT HERE, EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE. IT SHINES LIKE A NEW CHRISTMAS PRESENT. I CAN HARDLY WAIT TO TAKE MY FIRST DRIVE!

THE FIRST DRIVE RIGHTLY BELONGS TO ME, JOSEF. GET OUT!

BUT... YOUR HIGHNESS--?

YIELDING BEFORE THE DUKE'S ARROGANT GAZE...

REMEMBER YOUR PLACE. I ALWAYS COME FIRST.

YES... YOUR HIGHNESS...

VROOOOM

SCREEECH

OUT OF MY WAY, FOOL!

AFTER A HEART-BREAKING HOUR... ANOTHER DREAM IS TARNISHED...

YOU MAY HAVE IT NOW, JOSEF. I AM THROUGH USING IT!

DAY AFTER DAY, THE COWED IMMIGRANTS BOW BEFORE THE RUTHLESS DUKE'S DEMANDS... UNTIL...

WELCOME TO THE BETROTHAL PARTY OF MY DAUGHTER ILLYA TO LEO TARAS, FRIENDS. MAKE MERRY, AFTER LEO CLAIMS THE FIRST DANCE.

I HAVE THE FIRST CLAIM, AND ONLY I.

NO--NOT ILLYA--NOT HERE--NOT NOW!

YES, LEO. HERE. NOW. YOU CANNOT DEFY THE DUKE. IT IS HIS RIGHT.

I TOLD YOU A LONG TIME AGO YOU TOOK MY FANCY.

I HAVE NOT FORGOTTEN, YOUR HIGHNESS.

COME--LET US LEAVE THESE STARING PEASANTS AND GO TO THE NEXT ROOM-- WHERE WE WILL BE ALONE-- AND NO ONE CAN DISTURB US.

JUST AS YOU WISH, YOUR HIGHNESS.

SHORTLY,,, IN THE LOUNGE ADJACENT TO THE BANQUET HALL,,,

DON'T BE TIMID WITH ME, WENCH. COME HERE. YOU KNOW, BY ROYAL RIGHT, I AM FIRST ABOVE ANYONE ELSE--FOR ANYTHING AND ANYONE I WISH--

I KNOW... YOUR HIGHNESS...

WH-WHAT'S HAPPENED TO YOU? Y-YOUR FACE--? IT'S CH-CHANGED--? Y-YOU'RE NOT THE ILLYA I KNOW--?

YOUR EYES-- L-LIKE THE BLAZING FIRES OF HELL-- PARALYZING ME...

YOU HAVE ALWAYS CLAIMED THE RIGHT TO BE FIRST, YOUR HIGHNESS. YOUR WISH IS MY COMMAND.

N-NO... NO... NO...

YOU KNOW, YOUR HIGHNESS, THESE ARE MODERN TIMES. YOU ARE ONLY ENTITLED TO HAVE THE FIRST *KISS!*

CRA SH

THE END

NEXT ISSUE ON SALE ON OR ABOUT SEPT. 14TH